

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 MED-05 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 SY-05 MCT-02
/093 W

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R 282220Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8191

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PN
SUBJ: STRIKE BY INTERNS AND RESIDENTS IN PANAMA

1. DR. ERNESTO PEREZ BALLADARES, FISCAL ADVISER TO GEN. TORRIJOS, ANNOUNCED JULY 27 THAT IF THE GOP GIVES IN TO THE STRIKERS'DEMANDS, IT WOULD RESULT IN THE CLOSING OF SOME HEALTH CLINICS, AND A REDUCTION IN THE PURCHASE OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES. DR. PEREZ ESTIMATES THAT THE PAY INCREASES THE STRIKERS ARE DEMANDING WOULD MEAN AN ADDITIONAL \$11 MILLION ANNUALLY, OR 50 PERCENT OF THE EXISTING MEDICAL PAYROLL (\$22 MILLION).

2. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW NEW DEVELOPMENTS. DOCTORS IN THE PROVINCE OF VERAGUAS HAVE RETURNED TO WORK; THEY STATED THAT A CONTINUATION OF THE STRIKE WOULD SERVE ONLY TO ENDANGER THE HEALTH OF THE PUBLIC, BUT THAT THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE THEIR MORAL SUPPORT TO DOCTORS STILL ON STRIKE. EARLY THIS AFTERNOON, MEMBERS OF THE FENAMUDE (THE WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION OF "FRACCION", A MARXIST AND GENERALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT GROUP) STAGED A SMALL DEMONSTRATION (APPROX. 50-75 WOMEN) DOWN BALBOA AVENUE TO PROTEST THE DOCTORS' STRIKE. THE STRIKING DOCTORS HAVE BEEN

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DISTRIBUTING LEAFLETS WHICH STATE THAT IT IS NOT THEIR INTENTION TO MAKE THE PUBLIC SUFFER, THAT THEY HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN THEIR OBLIGATIONS TO THE COMMUNITY, AND THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO ENSURE THAT NO ONE WILL LACK PROPER MEDICAL ATTENTION.

3. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT IS PRESSURING INDIVIDUALS

AND ORGANIZATIONS TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE DOCTORS; EVERY DAY BRINGS ANOTHER FLURRY OF DENUNCIATIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS. THE DOCTORS' CASE IS GIVEN NO PUBLICITY. BECAUSE THE DOCTORS ARE A RELATIVELY AFFLUENT GROUP, THEY ARE NOT IN A GOOD POSITION TO GARNER POPULAR SUPPORT, IN ANY EVENT. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN HAVE SPOKEN PUBLICLY OF POSSIBLY BRINGING DOCTORS FROM OTHER

LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TO BREAK THE STRIKE. SO FAR, THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO GO VERY FAR TO SATISFY THE DOCTORS' DEMANDS (WHICH ARE BASED PRIMARILY ON UNFULFILLED PROMISES OF SALARY INCREASES IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS AND CLINICS).
JORDEN

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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 28 jul 1978
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